1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

habitations of devils are paid the respect of avoidance; and should a man be forced to go near to one of an evening he would perhaps burn a little incense—either juniper leaves or rice mixed with butter—so that the devil shall be gratified and not pursue him.

Except for being avoided and pointed out as local curiosities these devils' habitations are not distinguished in any way. Sacrifices are generally not made to or near them; if it were divined that illness was caused by a manifestation of a devil whose exact habitation was known, offerings might be made at that place; but I neither came across nor heard of one specific instance of this. All the numerous ceremonies that I witnessed and heard about took place in or just outside the house of the actual or potential sufferer; and though the offerings were often carried away after, they were never taken to the devil's habitation, but either to uncultivated ground, or to a place where two paths crossed. Only in one case did I hear of a devil's habitation being paid attention to. In the 'garden' of Jiroong are two outcrops of rock, which are the homes of Sabdok *moong* and his wife Loo *moong*. This female devil causes a specific skin disease, and if a person living in the neighbourhood should suffer from this, her stone (the lower of the two) will be anointed with holy water by a lama, and with milk by a Mun. It had been discovered by divination that this was the only home of Loo *moong* in the immediate neighbourhood, and the somewhat rare skin-disease, which is her speciality, could only arise from the anger of that particular manifestation.

The three big stones called *Kali lyang* in different parts of Lingthem fall into a different category. They are the places where laymen make sacrifices to keep away predatory animals. These sacrifices of different sorts of food are made once in the hot weather and once in the cold, and at other times if predatory animals are causing anxiety or annoyance. The stones themselves have no supernatural value at all; they are just the places where the sacrifices are always made.

There is however one big exception to the general rule. Nearly every family line—*ptso*—originated from the union of a particular lake and a particular mountain, the lake being the mother.[12] To these maternal lakes either annual or triennial (depending on the customs of the *ptso* in question) offerings must be made by all the descendants, or the inhabiting supernatural will withdraw her

[12] The Salong *ptso*, to which the serpent eaters of Pantoong belonged, is peculiar in tracing its original ancestor to the union of a woman with a monkey.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

favour and the people will not prosper and may suffer from sore eyes. It is not necessary that everyone should visit the lake in person; gifts can be given by proxy by another member of the same *ptso*.

There is another lake, *Luksom partam*, high up in Zongu, from whence birth is meant to have originated. Sterile couples who wish for children should visit this lake, spend the night on its bank copulating, and then in the morning throw into the waters a silver rupee and a *chimi* (altar light) to please the gods. If necessary this may be repeated annually for three years. The old widow, a nun, who told me about this had performed the complete rite with her husband, but unsuccessfully.

The connection between water and birth runs all through the Mun mythology. In the divine world where the two gods Tak-bo-*thing* and Narzong-*nyou* live there is a stream called Lungfung which represents the birth of male children, and a well called Rung-zel *oong-lap* which represents the birth of female children. This well is guarded by a supernatural boy called Sathim *ong*, and on occasion a family which has many girls and no boys will get a Mun to make sacrifices to the boy and the two gods to make the two pieces of water change place.

It will be noted that even in the case of these sacred lakes an explicit distinction is made between the lakes themselves and the supernaturals who inhabit them.

Devils have been occasionally seen by some people, sometimes looking like fierce animals, sometimes more or less like human beings (though generally covered with hair), sometimes as misty and gigantic shapes. They are far more frequently heard, whistling and crying, sometimes wailing like a banshee; and the god of hunters, Pong *rum*, persecutes those who displease him with poltergeist-like performances, throwing stones at the people or their houses and so on. To see or hear a devil is alarming, but not excessively so; there is nothing to be done except to run away or to turn aside one's eyes; though some bold people throw stones at devils and shoo them away as though they were marauding dogs. In the case of poltergeist performances the sufferer will burn incense, or perhaps just smoke a cigarette at the devil. To guard against the accidental meeting of devils the lamas prepare amulets, composed of charms written on paper and sewn into a piece of cloth which is worn on the dress; and Mun give the specially prepared roots of *s'lek* (a dioeceous plant which grows above the snow level) to be rubbed over the body.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

593 184 community of Gangtok, was that parent and child, brother and sister, would joke and act without the least restraint in one another's presence. In fact the Gangtok Lepchas dubbed their brothers of Zongu shameless and uncivilised. Obscene remarks, gestures and actions are never directed towards people nearly related; but the presence of such people is no restraint. Adult brothers and sisters should not, and on the whole do not, touch one another except in cases of actual necessity, such as helping a person at work or if they are ill. This prohibition does not extend to dressing [302 606] the hair, which can be performed by anybody for anybody else, with the exception of a son- or daughter-in-law and parent-in-law of the opposite sex.

ii

● 614 Every Lepcha belongs to a patrilineal clan or *ptso*, which is believed to have originated from some supernatural or legendary ancestor. Nowadays the chief function of the *ptso* is the regulation of marriage and the prevention of incest; it is, to all intents and purposes, an exogamic unit. In theory people of the same *ptso* are allowed to marry if they are separated by nine generations from a common ancestor, and to indicate that a person of the same *ptso* is very far removed a Lepcha will always say 'we can marry'; but in point of fact I did not come upon nor hear of a single instance of two people of the same *ptso* marrying. It was generally stated that though such a marriage was permissive, people would feel shame in it.

It is allowable to marry back into a mother's *ptso* after four generations; but so near a connection is considered somewhat shameless. Datoop's father, the first Dorjé Lapoon, took as his second wife a woman he called 'aunt' (*a-nyou*); his grandmother was a sister of her mother. This marriage was considered quite shameless, and even nearly sixty years later was a subject for embarrassment; but it demanded no sanctions against it, such as would have been invoked if the connection had been on the father's side.

It seems to me possible that in former times the *ptso* represented a geographical unit; in the very small villages there is a tendency for all, or at any rate the majority, of the men to be members of the same *ptso*. But nowadays this has broken down (if indeed it was ever institutionalised) completely; in Lingthem there are male representatives of twelve *ptso*. Of these the most populous

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

and powerful is the Jamyong *ptso* to which Chala Mandal belongs. Eleven of the thirty-two households belong to this *ptso* representing in all sixty-two individuals, or nearly a third of the population of the village (176); but from this number must be subtracted the twenty-one married women from other *ptso*; I have not reckoned the daughters who have married into other *ptso*. Zumchyung *ptso*, to which Tafoor and his family belong, is the next most populous; it represents five households and thirty-one people, less the ten married women. At the other end of the scale are the Demik and Lubdong Rabji *ptso*, with only a single representative of each—Katel and Pargeut—in the neighbourhood. As far as I can tell from questioning visitors to Lingthem, the situation is similar in the other bigger villages; one or two large and numerous *ptso*, of which the Mandal is nearly always a member, and several other smaller ones.[1]

There is a slight advantage in belonging to a numerous *ptso* because you have more people you can call 'brothers' on whose help you can count automatically; but it is not an overwhelming advantage, on account of the Lepcha habits of co-operation, and some of the richest and most successful people of Lingthem were members of small *ptso*. In the choice of a son- or daughter-in-law the size of the *ptso* is sometimes taken into consideration; it is better for a child-in-law to come from a numerous *ptso*, for then there will be greater possibility of obtaining a second spouse, in the event of the first one's sterility or death. A stranger such as Tempa who marries into a populous *ptso* (his wife's father was Jamyong *ptso*) has the same advantages as if he were himself a member of it and his wife's relations behave to him exactly as if they were his own.

Each *ptso* is under the guardianship of certain supernaturals, who are worshipped by all the male members of the *ptso*; every third year all the men of one locality gather together and make a sacrifice of an ox and certain jewels and valuables (these latter are only symbolically offered and are subsequently retaken into use) followed by a feast; these feasts are held in rotation in the houses of the members of the *ptso* who live in the neighbourhood. This sacrifice is entirely under the direction of the Mun, with no admixture of lamaism at all, and a few of the more pious lamas refuse to participate in them, claiming that the lamas have in Chukyoong *rum* a 'guild' supernatural more powerful and more worthy of worship than the

[1] The distribution of *ptso* in Lingthem is tabulated in Appendix I, b.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

gods of the *ptso*; but the greater number of lamas feel no metaphysical qualms and bear their full share in this Mun ceremony. The *ptso* supernaturals are always invoked by the Mun when they perform a ceremony for the benefit of a particular individual. In the Mun theogony all the *ptso* supernaturals are friendly and there is no rivalry between the groups; it is thought that the more populous the *ptso* the stronger the guardian supernaturals.

The *ptso* supernaturals descend, as it were, from father to son; women have other different supernaturals which descend from mother to daughter; with the consequence that brothers and sisters have different guardian supernaturals, although all children are counted as members of their father's *ptso*. (An exception must be made in the case of unacknowledged bastards, who are considered to be members of the *ptso* of their mother's father.) These women's supernaturals are invoked, along with numberless others, at the Mun ceremonies after sowing and harvesting, and special sacrifices are made in their intention in the case of illness. Special sacrifices are also made to them at the time of the marriage feast, and the questioning of the bride about her special supernaturals is one of the most formalised incidents in the marriage ceremonies. There are certain other supernaturals which are common to all women; these include Ami *rum*, the god of riches, and Katong Fi who visits women in their dreams and copulates with them at the time of their menses; this dream-copulation is meant to continue throughout life, and should a month pass without this dream it means that the woman is shortly going to die. Parallel to these exclusively female supernaturals are Pong *rum*, and his wife Shing *rum*, the patrons of hunting, who are worshipped exclusively by men. There are also other supernaturals who are as it were patrons of each sex respectively, and yet others who belong to the family, as distinct from the *ptso*. Among the countless supernaturals with which the world is filled these personal and private ones have no great significance; along with numberless others—the enumeration of gods in a Mun sacrifice may take two or three hours—they are prayed to for the blessings of long life, many children, and prosperity, but their power is not considered to be great.

Except as an exogamic classification the *ptso* is now functionless. Although members of the different *ptso* are scattered, not only throughout Zongu, but wherever Lepchas live, the triennial unions only gather those members who live near one another; to the best of my knowledge there has never been, nor has there ever

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

been a reason for, a general gathering of all the members of the *ptso*. A traveller among strange people has no claim on the hospitality of unknown members of his *ptso*, though it would still be shameful for two members of the same *ptso* to have sexual connection. More than anything else, the *ptso* is a device for the prevention of incest.

iii

Incest for the Lepchas is horrifying; they do not call it a sin but *nam-toak*, an act which produces a year of disaster for the community. Sin is a lamaist conception and is on the whole only applied to acts like the killing of animals; *nam-toak* is the phrase used for personal acts which are felt to be strongly anti-social. Any sexual connection with blood relations for nine generations on the father's side and four on the mother's is considered incestuous; but children under the age of puberty, or, as the Lepchas say 'who are not old enough to know shame', are not considered capable of committing incest and no watch is kept on children's play. Besides blood relations sexual connection with the following relations-by-marriage is considered as incestuous: for a man to sleep with any of the women he calls 'mother-in-law' or 'daughter-in-law' (that is his wife's mother, his wife's elder sister, the wife of his wife's elder brother, and his sons' wives, the wives of his *younger* brothers, and the wives of his brothers' and sisters' sons); for a woman, to sleep with any of the men she calls 'father-in-law' or 'son-in-law' (that is her husband's father, her husband's *elder* brothers, the husband of her husband's elder sister, and her daughter's husbands, the husbands of her younger sisters, and the husbands of her brothers' and sisters' daughters). Such relationships, besides causing a year of disaster to the community, would call down a devil on to the guilty couple who would cover them with sores. Should children result from such a union they would be allowed to live, but they would either be of an evil mind or idiots, and would be short-lived.

No cases of mother-son or father-daughter incest are known of; nor does the situation occur in any mythological story. Brother-sister incest on the other hand is a motive in a great deal of Mun mythology, inevitably so, for the world and all that therein is are the children of Itpomu the Creative Mother. The origin of devils and noxious animals arises from the incest of her first two 'human' children (if I can so express it) Komsi*thing* and Narzong-*nyou*. I only heard of one case of true brother-sister incest, and that

J: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

837 as several Lepchas said when the point was raised 'Who can force a grown woman against her will?' More distantly related women, such as 'aunts', may put up a certain amount of semi-playful resistance, but no rancour is felt if it is overborne.

It is considered to be an act of excessively bad taste to copulate with a heritable wife in her husband's presence, or in such situations that there is a possibility of his witnessing it. These legalised adulteries usually take place during the husband's temporary absence, or else outside the house, in the forests or fields or field-houses; these outdoor encounters are usually very brief, and have a slightly romantic flavour. Copulation inside the house has the advantage of giving longer time, but it also exposes the couple to questionable remarks and a good deal of teasing.

836 One of the results of this situation is that almost all boys and
864 young men get their first real sexual experience and training from an older married woman. Elder brothers usually explicitly instruct their younger brothers in their rights. In Lepcha theory a woman should never make direct sexual advances—the common Lepcha words for sexual activity are, like the English ones, transitive and one-directioned—but in point of fact I found that in nearly every case men had had their first real sexual experience with the wife of an 'elder brother' or 'uncle' at the woman's direct invitation and solicitation. This is considered altogether desirable; although sexual activity is thought to be as natural and as necessary as eating, it is necessary that boys should be taught to do it properly. Thus Chudo said one day 'If I caught Chimpet (the son of his elder brother Tafoor) sleeping with my wife I shouldn't be cross at all; on the contrary I should be very pleased, for she would be teaching him how to do it properly and I would know that he was in the hands of a good teacher! On the other hand, if I caught a married man, who had a right to sleep with my wife, doing so I should reproach them for their lack of shame in doing in my presence what might better be done in my absence; if I was really angry I should tell other people about it, so that everybody might know how shameless the man had been.'

● 614 I have already suggested that the *ptso* was possibly earlier a
836 geographical unit; if this were the case, it seems to me possible that these permissive regulations were evolved to meet the special circumstances. For, with the *ptso* as the geographical unit, the young men would have had no possible sexual partners except through adultery or incest; and, as numerous examples show, such

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

614 835 situations inevitably lead to jealousy, fighting, and the splitting of the group. By their regulations the Lepchas have reduced intra-group aggression to the minimum. The potential rivalry between father and son is mitigated by taking the arrangements for the child's marriage entirely out of the parents' hands; the potential rivalry between brothers is mitigated by allowing the younger brother access to his more favoured and stronger elder brother's wife, while making the relationship between an elder brother and his younger sister-in-law strongly incestuous. In this connection it is [538] worth while noting that in the very large and elaborate Lepcha folk-lore and mythology I did not come upon a single instance of the otherwise almost universal compensatory story of the conflict between brothers, in which the despised, or ill-used younger brother or sister makes good after the elders have failed.

152 There is no specific word for 'jealousy' in Lepcha. When I presented hypothetical jealous situations to Lepchas and asked them what their feelings would be, the greater number say they would be angry; but this word, *sak-lyak*, does not carry very strong emotional connotations; it is the word used by parents if their children are naughty, or by workmen if they come across an un-[195] expected difficulty in their work. It is also the most general euphem-ism for a sexual erection; I cannot untangle the associations which have produced this metaphor, but there is no question that the word is used in both senses; more than once I have heard a workman say when, for example, cords have got tangled 'I am as angry as a [831] standing penis.' Despite the one-directioned sex-words, sexual activity is never openly equated with aggression; it is generally believed that both sexes enjoy it equally, though a few people maintained that women enjoy it more; almost all were agreed that women enjoy it later in life than men do. On the other hand [833] point may be given to the metaphor by the fact that during copula-tion only the man is active; the woman lies completely passive and relaxed.

152 831 The Lepchas of Zongu have dissipated nearly all the highly-charged emotional feelings which in many other societies are centred around sex, and on the whole neither sexual activity nor jealousy are strong motivating factors in their lives. There are a few exceptions to this generalisation; the quarrels fostered by the outsider, Mrs. Jiroong, have already been described in Chapter Three; and married women who show marked preference even for perfectly hereditable spouses, and married men who show preference

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

773 Tarbong Pu; the first woman Nari Pu. They lived on the twin peaks beyond Seniolchum; and from them all the races of man, including the Lepchas, are descended.

* * * * *

614 The Lepcha tribe is composed of a number of clans, called
619 *pu-tso*. No one can say how many clans there are, for this grouping seems to be a purely local one. In the Kalimpong district I recorded the names of over forty different clans, but in Lingtem there were but fourteen, all of them different from those I had already collected. There does not appear ever to have been any sort of tribal organisation, nor even a tribal leader; and while I use the word clan to denote these collections of people, it would be better to regard them as merely belonging to one large family, which is in fact what
614 they are. We shall probably never know what functions the clan formerly possessed, but its sole use nowadays is in regulating marriage, it being impossible for a man to marry a girl of the same *pu-tso* as his own. Ethnologists call this custom exogamy: but Lepcha exogamy is of a special kind, for it does permit a man to marry a relative of his father provided the relationship is removed by five (but some say seven) generations. Such a marriage is of course only possible with a person descended through the father's sister, since she, having married into another clan, belongs to a different *pu-tso*. In the case of a marriage between the descendants of two sisters a separation of only three generations is demanded. In actual practice all this means is that any two related people, provided they do not both belong to the same clan, may marry provided the relationship between them is sufficiently distant as to have been forgotten for all practical purposes.

Most people know the story of how their own clan originated, and these myths have probably been reinterpreted many times. There is a great similarity between them, but the following is a typical example.

Up towards the mountains there is a big cliff on which

Up towards the mountains there is a big cliff on which
many monkeys used to live. Below it was a limpid pool, in 614 773
which a young girl was in the habit of bathing. One day, when she was leaving the water, a monkey came down to her and the two lay together. In due course a child was born and this was the first member of the Sungvel clan. Now the land in these parts belonged to some Tibetans, seven of whom came one day to gather honey. When they saw how steep the place was they realised that they could never climb it, so they asked Sungvel, who by then had a son of his own, to climb it for them. Sungvel told the seven Tibetans to sit in a row by the pool, since if they came nearer they would be stung by the bees. He and his son then climbed the cliff. They tied their ankles together so as to get a better hold on the smooth rock-face, and by mounting on one another's shoulders managed to reach the place where the honey was. The son tore it out with his hands and threw it down. As soon as the bees saw what was happening they swarmed out and started to attack the seven men who were sitting below. They were stung so badly that the pain was unendurable: the only thing to do was to jump into the water, and so they were all drowned. After this Sungvel and his son took possession of the land, but the clan is now extinct.

I have already said that the Lepchas have neither tribal 636
nor clan organisation; but in order to regulate their dealings with the state certain officials have been appointed. Firstly, there is the *Mukhtiyar*, who deals direct with the Maharaja's agent in Gangtok. This is a comparatively new office, the present holder being only the third in succession.

There is but one Mukhtiyar for the whole of Jongu, and his 636
duty is to supervise and co-ordinate the work of the separate 622
village *Mandals* or headmen. The Mandals collect taxes in [65]
their respective villages and go once every year with the actual cash to Gangtok: but since most of them are completely illiterate they deliver their accounts verbally to the Mukhtiyar, who records them in writing. The Mukhtiyar 636
receives no pay but is entitled to a commission of four annas a year for each house on which taxes are paid. He tours all

/892/ 2. Second Version

773 Another version of the legend of the tower building, one which
●614 makes a claim to greater exactness, asserts that the erection of the tower was not undertaken by the ancestors of the Lepchas, but by a sib belonging to the Lepcha people which had the name Na ong. In present day Lepcha the word Na ong means "stupid fellow," —but it is probable that it took on this derogatory sense only later through the association of the sib name Na ong with the tradition of the absurd and unsuccessful tower building. In addition to the word Na ong sometimes the expression Chelickchom is also used as a designation for this clan; the latter word appears to come from the language of the Limbus, a people related to the Lepchas, and would thus strengthen the view encountered among the Limbus that the so-called Na ong or Chelickchoms were not Lepchas, but Limbus.

114 The chronicle of the maharajahs of Sikkim—in which the Na ong
614 are listed among the Lepcha sibs—as well as the few scholarly publications that mention the name Na ong (5) report unanimously that

5. Das, The Lepcha people, p. 5.—G. B. Mainwaring, A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language (Calcutta, 1876), p. XX. —G. B. Mainwaring and A. Grünwedel, Dictionary of the Lepcha Language (Berlin, 1898), p. 189b. —De Beauvoir-Stocks, p. 359.

that sib has long been extinct. This assertion, to be sure, is not precisely true, for even at the beginning of this century there lived, near the place at which originally the tower was supposed to have been constructed, a family whose members regarded themselves as the last descendants of the Na ong tribe. In designating themselves they used the expression "tribe" /Stamm/. The head of this family, a man named Karandal, seems, however, to have been the only one who was still very familiar with the traditions of the Na ong. It was therefore he who gave the information for the report handed over to Sir Charles Bell. According to the information of the last preserver of the Na ong traditions, the building of the tower and the later history of the tribe ran as follows:

773 It was in gray primeval times that the tribe of the Na ong came
539 into the world. The place that supposedly became the birthplace of

23: Benedict
184, 192, 582, 591, 602, 611, 613, 614, 616, 618, 621

ALl Southeast Asia
Lepcha AK5

/For lists of kinship terms, and for excellent and detailed information concerning correlations between kinship terminology, patterns of behavior, and social institutions, see category 601./